

Feral Hogs: Virginia...we have a problem.

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Presentation Objectives

- Brief introduction of feral swine
- Current distribution and status
- Negative impacts
- Problems and issues
- Questions



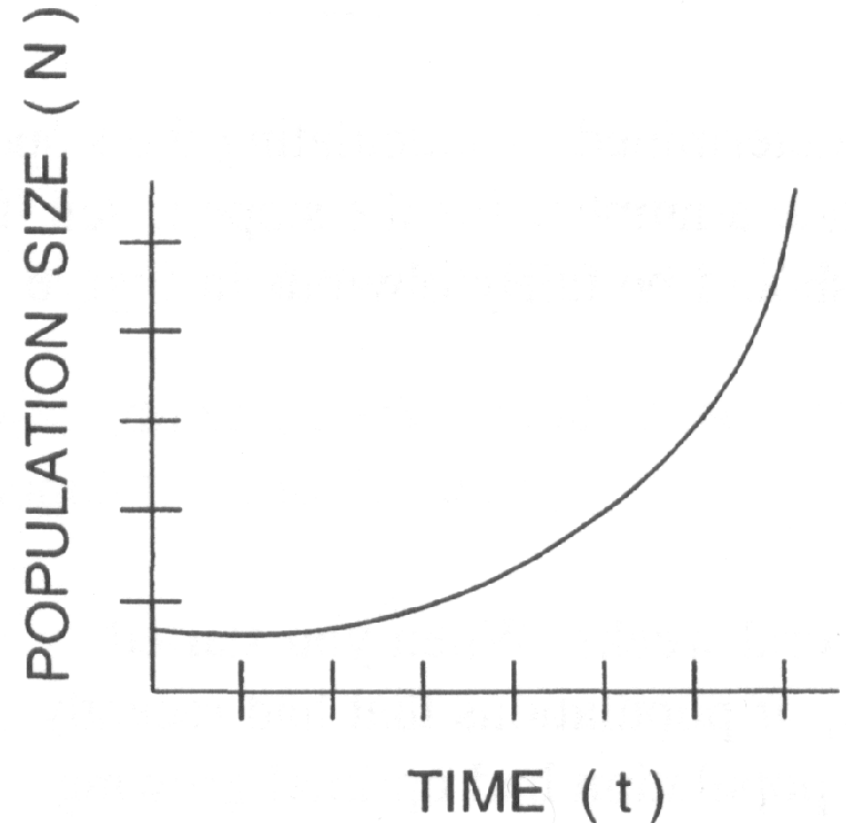
What is a Feral Pig?

- In short, no good legal definition at this time
- All swine descended from Eurasian wild boars
- Domestication occurred over 9,000 years ago
- Domestication changed the appearance of the pig
- A pig is a pig, *Sus scrofa*, and color is not important!



Population Dynamics

- High reproductive output
- Low natural mortality
- Population can triple in a little over 1 year
- **To stabilize you must remove 70% each year!**
- **Nearly impossible once established!**



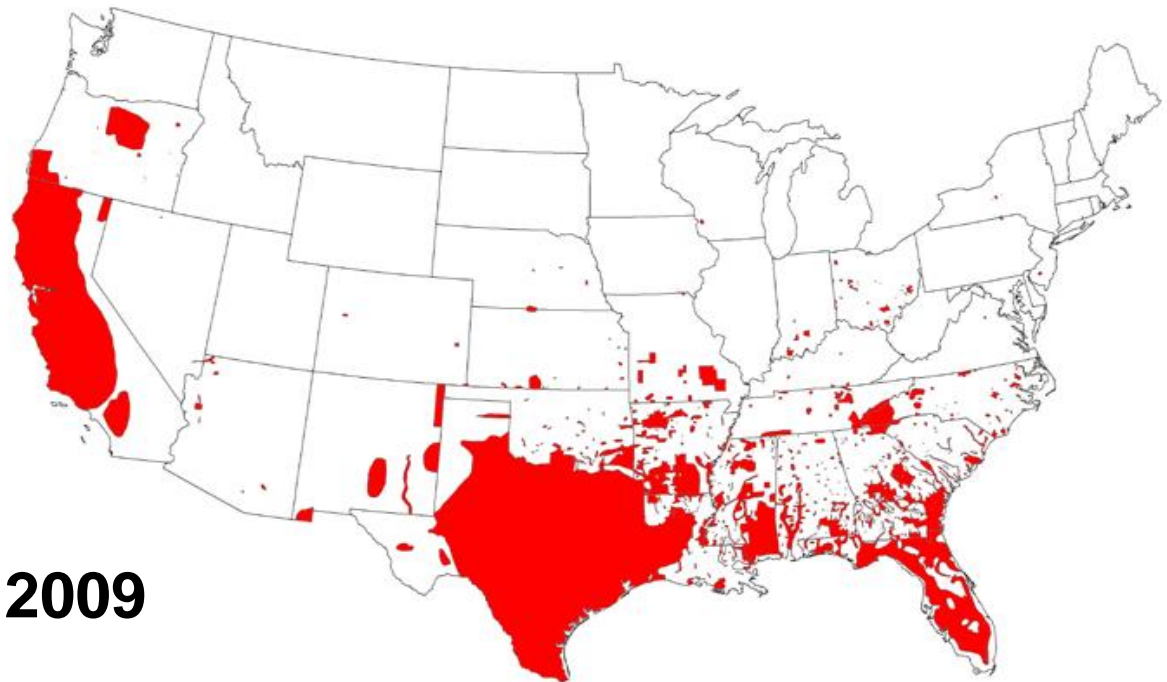
How did they get here?

- Many early settlers “free-ranged” pigs
- Some game agencies managed pigs as a game animal
 - NC, TN, FL, and WV
- Expansion of populations in recent decades
 - Natural expansion from established populations
 - Moving populations for hunting purposes
- Back Bay NWR / False Cape State Park example
 - Domestic swine abandoned in early 1900's



1988

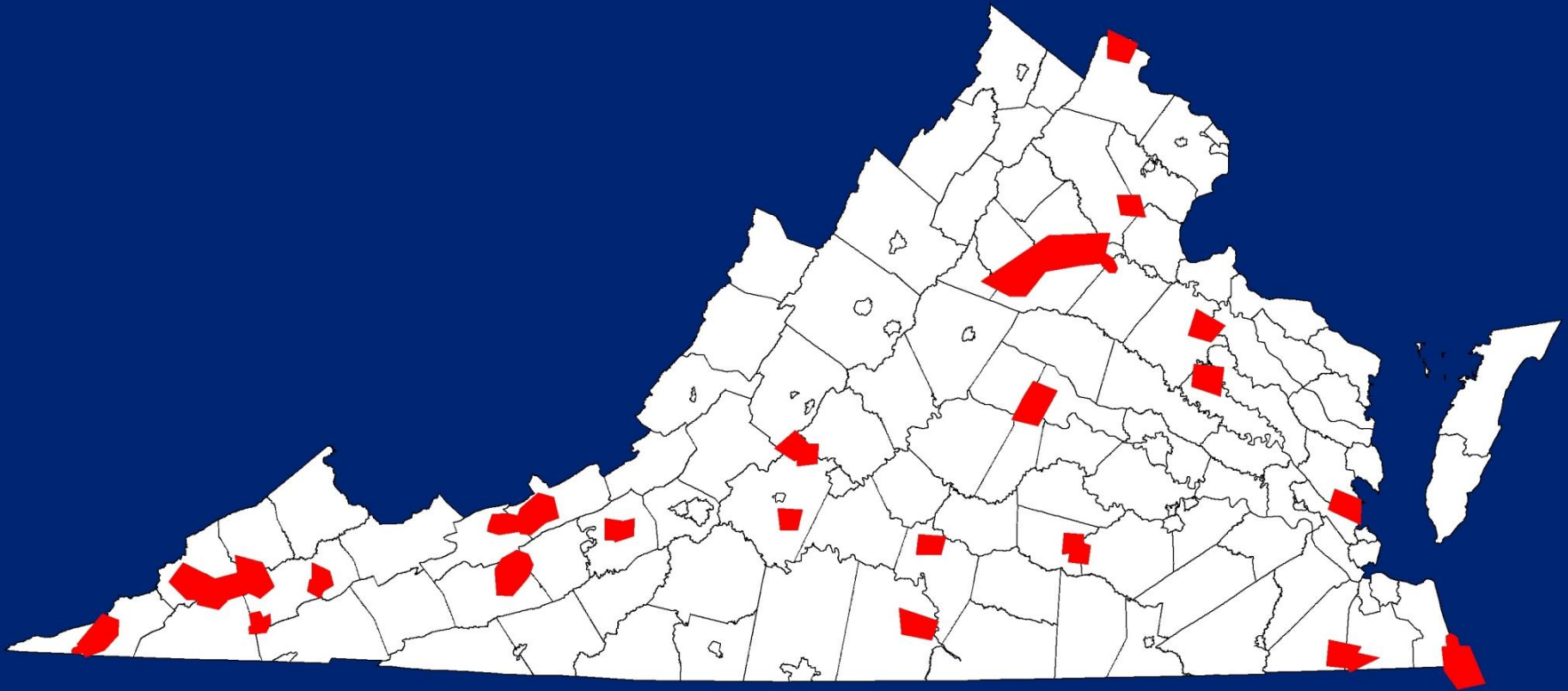
**Southeastern
Cooperative Wildlife
Disease Study
(SCWDS) –
University of Georgia**



2009

Hey... I didn't see anything for
Virginia, what gives?

Known Hog Locations 1993 - 2012



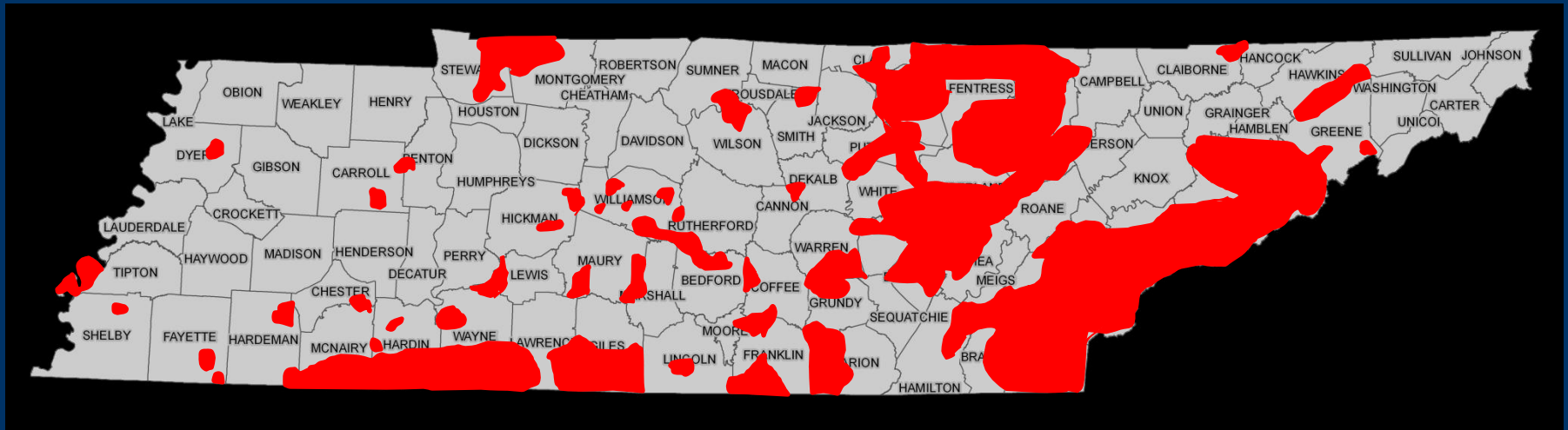
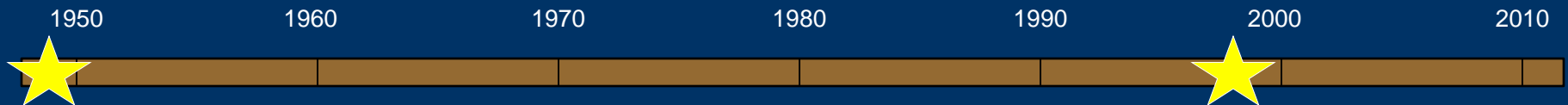
Time Lapse View of Wild Hog Range Expansion

In 1999, the TWRA authorized a statewide, year-round, no-limit, hog hunting season.

The following is 50+ years of “No Hunting” statewide hog regulations.

(Hog hunting was only permitted in areas with known populations)

Here is what happened in just over 10 years of statewide hog hunting....



Why Do We Care?

- Threats to wildlife
- Ecological damage
- Crop damage
- Disease concerns
- USDA-NWRC ranking



Chris Jaworowski

Threats to Wildlife Resources

- Direct competition for food
- Predation of small animals
 - Salamanders, frogs, snakes, even white-tailed deer fawns
- Predation of ground nesting birds
 - Nests and young (turkey, grouse, quail)
- Significant predator of sea turtle eggs in coastal areas
- Sedimentation of streams
 - Interferes with many aquatic invertebrates' life cycle
 - Decreases spawning habitat for certain fish
 - Significantly impacts freshwater mussel productivity and survivability
 - Very sensitive in Chesapeake Bay watersheds



Bill Hamrick



MSU & Alabama
Cooperative Extension



Ecological Damage

- Rooting increases soil erosion
- Damage to sensitive plant communities
 - Especially problematic in riparian communities
- Water contamination
- Disturbance may increase spread of invasive plants
- Interrupts natural nutrient cycling



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Crop Damage

- Pigs cause millions of dollars in lost revenue to farmers annually
- Estimated at \$1.5 billion annually nationwide
- Vegetables, corn, soybeans, fruit trees, small grain, planted pine seedlings
- Damage to infrastructure
 - Pond levees, fences, irrigation equipment, etc
- Rooted fields can cause injury to livestock and damage to farm equipment
- Is happening right now in Virginia (Culpeper, Orange, and Halifax counties)



05/10/2012 19:22

Gene Sullivan



05/26/2012 19:42

Gene Sullivan



Mike Dye



Allen Boynton

047F 07:30PM 11/19/2011 00012 FARM



Disease Risk

USDA-Wildlife Services

- Swine brucellosis
- Pseudorabies
- Numerous internal parasites
 - ❑ Toxoplasmosis
 - ❑ Lungworms
 - ❑ Kidney worm
 - ❑ Liver flukes
 - ❑ Ascarid roundworm
 - ❑ Trichinosis



Other states?

- Feral hogs are an issue and being addressed in many states: LA, MS, KY, TN, MO, KS, NE, OR, MI, SC, NC, NY, IN, TX
- South Carolina:
 - Estimated 37,000 harvested in 2009
 - Population: Estimated 150,000 animals in 2010
 - Approximately 25% harvest

State Reports

- Kentucky: New bill passed against illegal release – Class A misdemeanor and 10-year hold on hunting license
- Kansas & Nebraska: Very successful and aggressive control programs. Aerial gunning a huge success.
- Tennessee: Long history of feral hogs and issues, learned some hard lessons the recent decades.

Current Management Issues

- Swine are defined as livestock in Virginia law
 - No distinction between captive versus free-ranging swine
- Feral hogs declared as a nuisance species by law in Virginia
- Legal ownership of swine and the physical location of swine inside or outside of confinement is very complicated

VA Fence Law is at the County Level

- Augusta County (“fence-in” county): A pig farmer has pigs escape their property and pigs damage fields of an adjacent landowner. The pig farmer is liable for damages.
- Rockingham County (“fence-out” county): It is a landowner’s responsibility to construct a fence to keep another’s livestock from being able to access their property. The same pig farmer would not be liable for damages if the adjacent farmer did not have a “legal fence.”

The Issues

- Unlike other domestic livestock, swine have the ability to survive and thrive once in a free-ranging state (look at southern states...)
- VDACS and VDGIF need to protect our natural resources, agricultural community, and domestic swine operations by removing legal protection for swine that aren't under the direct control of anyone
- Expansion of feral swine heavily attributed to illegal introduction

What Have We Done So Far?

- Joint meetings and discussion with VDACS, USDA-WS, USDA-NRCS, USFWS
- All parties see a clear need to work towards solutions that will enable us to manage feral swine in Virginia
- VDGIF already classifies feral pigs as a nuisance species and describes methods to control

Current Work

- Working with VDACS on potential solutions to help manage the problem
 - Will aid in management/control of loose or feral swine
- DGIF regulation work, issues we will be exploring
 - Transport and release issues
 - Potential control methods for landowners

Current Work

- Developing an MOU with USDA-WS, USDA-NRCS, and USFWS to gather partner support for our efforts to control and eradicate feral hogs in Virginia
 - 30+ NGO's in mind: primarily conservation, recreation, and sporting organizations
- Gained support from Virginia Farm Bureau and Virginia Pork Industry Association
- Implementing an information and education plan that includes: community meetings, development of articles for publication, media outreach, and website resources

Questions?



For more information please visit:

http://www.extension.org/feral_hogs

<http://wildpiginfo.msstate.edu/index.html>